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### When transfiguration became commonplace

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# When Transfiguration Became Commonplace

The Confraternity of Neoflagellants

*I love looking at what HSN and others have to offer in avatar vestments, but when it comes time to buy, I prefer in-app vestments that are one-of-a-kind and hand-coded. The hand-coded items are creative and made with care because someone's heart and soul has been put into designing and creating the piece. Plus, great customer service isn't handed out like it used to be by retailers. But when you buy directly from the artisan, you get personalized service.*

A Priest Avatar to Bob Sacamano,  
HSN Website

*Host refers to a process whereby objects become persons and persons become objects. The concept of "host" describes how cultural production may be understood as an array of "vessels" that collect, reassemble and transmit collective meaning. These vessels (human and non-human) are not strictly subject to the rigid hierarchical classification (such as art/non-art) pre-scribed by "promoters of technical rationalities and financial profitabilities" but rather, following Michel de Certeau (1984, 107), they operate within the tactically sublimated realms of the practice of everyday life.*

Alexandr Petrovsky,  
*Transfiguration is Commonplace*<sup>1</sup>

## Part 1. Franklin Mint School of Leadership

Alexandr Petrovsky's passion for inspiration, creativity and innovation was evident in his long and distinguished career as a developer, content curator, and entrepreneurial provocateur, pioneering new developments in the field of hypereconomic promotions. Of course, in his prime, Petrovsky was an avid collector and "arranger" of celebrity Cryostickers. This collection—which served as a springboard to Petrovsky's visionary hybrid of content and brand curation—is researched and archived by a dedicated team of interns drawn from his contributor community. Free&d-ing tirelessly at the Petrovsky Foundation of the Lay's Stax Museum of Fine Arts in his hometown of St. Petersburg, Florida, the interns maintain a vast mnemosyne of fin-de-siecle Cryostick-



Figure 01  
Petrovsky Passage shopping center Moscow, Russia,  
one of the most expensive malls in the world

based culture, a must-see for any pilgrim on the Petrovsky trail.

Towards the end of his life, Petrovsky, more aware than ever of his own mortality, returned to re-examine the roots of his practice, his early relic-ing as an apprentice under the master content curator Bob Sacamano at the Willard Corporation. *When Transfiguration Became Commonplace* (Newcastle Art Gallery, New South Wales), is the first exhibition to explore this facet of Petrovsky's ascendancy. It does so via negativa. Examples of Petrovsky's relic-ing are notably absent from the exhibition. Petrovsky's freesearch and development is implied, inferred in the handiwork of Brandeum's peers, forebears, and disciples. The vast exhibition is ambitious in scale, conflating examples of proto and post-Petrovskian "Sherlocking" and "relic-ing," to give a fuller sense of the importance of these largely forgotten practices.

The legendary anchorite Sacamano holds a central place in this reassessment. In recent years, Sacamano's entrepreneurship has become increasingly central to understanding the richness of Petrovsky's early practice as a developer. Sacamano claimed, erroneously, to have coined the term "relic-ing," a phrase he used to

describe his business studies teaching, undertaken while hosting on the Home Shopping Network (HSN) in the Tampa Bay area. When Sacamano first joined HSN, the television channel was still serving as one of the main forums for authenticating and trading domestic commodities. All this was to change as the great economic catastrophe generated a fatal combination of hyperinflation and relentless breaches of the security of financial information.

As the restricted economy was replaced with what George Bataille once termed the “general economy,” hypereconomics flourished. The denationalization

of fiat currencies and an assemblage of “alternative” forms of trading, such as barter and gift economies, Local Exchange Trading Systems (LETS), virtual currencies, hawala,



Figures 02-02.1

Home Shopping Network  
Image Source: Google  
image search

and *furta sacra* would soon emerge as competing means to address these concerns. Petrovsky led the way in exploiting and developing the emerging hypereconomy.

Petrovsky first encountered Sacamano while enrolled in the “20-Minute MBA in Content Curating” at the University of the Mall of America Online. Sacamano, a visiting associate professor at the University’s Franklin Mint School of Leadership in Les Cours Mont-Royal, ran an accredited MOOC (Massive Online Open Course) on “Neomedieval Entrepreneurialism” based in PATH. His controversial business ideas were predicated on a medievalist reading of the escalating economic crisis:

Neomedievalism embraces the spectral traces or “uncertain knowledges” of its historical past as part of an ever-morphing, force-feedback simulation (or permanent rehearsal) of coming events. The longing for a future assembled from a bricolage of pre-modern components embeds itself deeper with every advance in the technologies of representation. The fantasy endeavors to supplant the Real through ever more immersive verisimilitudes.<sup>2</sup>

His maverick pre-modern approach contrasted dramatically with the then dominant Franklin Mint School of Leadership's emphasis on futura, promoting dated mantras such as "the long tail," "black swans," "the tipping point," "the war for talent," and "corporate responsibility."<sup>3</sup> The economic crisis was prompting new security questions, questions to which only Sacamano had the answers. The answers came in the shape of two closely related practices: "Sherlocking" and "relic-ing."

Sherlocking was predicated on the commonly held assumption that culture was permeated by socioeconomic discourse at every conceivable level—from conception through production to distribution and consumption—just as socioeconomic discourses were pervaded by cultural debates. A modicum of artistic autonomy, nevertheless, lived on in mythical form, embodied in the online gift-economy. Transmogrified from its hippie roots by how-to knowledge, knowledge made freely available by the new wave indie media and hip-capitalism of the 1970s and '80s, the online gift economy offered services that few others in the corporatized cultural sector could provide.

"Freeconomics" was widely presumed to be at the root of the



immediacy that helped to generate cultural capital.<sup>4</sup> The “indies” at the forefront of cultural developments tended to be those that found the



Figure 03  
Rick Owen's Spring 2016  
Ready-to-Wear  
Image Source: Google  
image search

most creative ways to exploit freeconomics. To generate and maintain ‘free’ resources, the indies observed a strict, albeit unwritten, moral code:

- There shall be no commodities, only gifts and counter-gifts.
- No lurkers. To receive, you must give.
- Gifts must be bestowed upon the commons or exchanged peer-to-peer within your network.
- Gifts may be exchanged for social prestige, but not for profit.

We can draw a number of observations from this. Firstly, in a general sense, gifts, rather than money, provided the indies with the means of defining and maintaining social relations and status. Secondly, all forms of gift giving were reciprocal: to receive something *committed* you to counter-gifting *within your own network*. There was, therefore, a localized system of establishing

value among peers within a specific community of practice. Thirdly, provided that you gifted your output to the commons you were free to use the open resources of the commons. Thus, distinct communities of practice<sup>5</sup> were reciprocally tied to one another via a commonwealth of networks.

The reciprocal nature of the gift in this code of conduct meant that participants were obligated to the indie commonwealth, since to take part in this culture meant partaking of the fruits of the commons. On entering a reciprocal relationship with the commons, participants were forever subordinated to it. The commonwealth provided a *largesse* greater than any individual could return to it in the form of a counter-gift. The commons' gift was agonistic, a potlatch, a "non-extinguishable debt."<sup>6</sup> This helped to generate an "immediacy of return" in the form of rapidly increasing the cultural capital of the indies. While governance of the indies varied widely in practice, most indies provided open access to their projects and developments via committee and open membership-based organization. Elected committees kept ledgers of gifts and counter-gifts to ensure that reciprocity was honored and that the commons was sustainably "farmed" via regular donations.

While corporations could exploit the commons as “free” research and development (free&d)—they could not offer the flexibility, collegiate culture and loyal communitarian responses of the indies since they were corporatized rather than socially democratized. Indies were personalized—as very small organizations they had no choice other than to erode the roles of producer, distributor and consumer. This allowed them to fully develop the implications of the cultural turn to the symbolic realm of work and the economy, generating a “consensus of authenticity.”

Indies were “authentic”—an illusion of sorts created by the fact that they made labor more transparent and collective and less diffused and departmentalized than it had been in larger cultural corporations. The indies’ consensus of authenticity ensured that they were patronized in ways that many cultural enterprises would loved to have been. They were rewarded via the increasing levels of contribution people volunteered, perhaps, initially, as an interested visitor or, in time, as services, goods, time, and labor donated freely. Cultural capital was dependent on the veneration of a community, and this veneration was construed socially. The more the community gifted to the indies, the more venerated and

powerful the commons became.

The power of the open network seemed to attest that, for many fundamental forms of research, cooperation could prove preferable to competition. While it may have been cooperative, the gift economy was far from uncompetitive. There was intense competition for status exercised through lavish peer-to-peer gift exchange. Competition for power raged through the generation of gift “debt” obligations between members as well as between the indies themselves. The complex co-operation that generated the cultural capital of the indies was driven by spiritual trade with the higher power of the commons. Whatever form of gift exchange they participated in, indie members made donations *pro anima* towards the singularity<sup>7</sup> in anticipation of the day when they would become one with technology. The highest ethical gesture of gifting “proprietary” knowledge selflessly to the greater good of the commons offered participants “divine compensation in the form of salvation,”<sup>8</sup> not only from commerce but from their corporeal bodies. This is what made indie media more “valuable” than the proprietary media they sought to supersede. Since reputation was socially constructed, indie media—the code, the ideas and the social capital generated

in the open source movement—was considered to be “embodied.” It carried the virtue of the community.<sup>9</sup> Indie media were, effectively, person-objects.

The indies themselves were a means of socially incubating person-objects via social networks. For Sacamano, this phenomenon closely resembled the pre-modern practice of “relic-ing.” Petrovsky’s endnotes recall how Sacamano required his students to play *Age of Empires II: Age of Kings* (1999) to gain a deeper understand of how medieval<sup>10</sup> monasteries, monarchies, and townships relied upon a communal set of beliefs revolving around an established cult of sainthood. For a cult to be constructed and bound to a particular geographic region, the saint (after being “discovered” or “invented”) must be physically present in the form of their relics. To maintain the veneration of a community (and the vital influx of pilgrims) a consensus of authenticity had to be upheld through repeated displays of thaumaturgic powers.<sup>11</sup>

The regularity and quality of such posthumous displays brought enormous benefits in revenue and a competitive edge over neighboring regions with less effective relics or no relics at all.<sup>12</sup> A person-object then, could not be considered solely in terms

of its “thing-ness” alone, but must rather be considered as a relational hub or conduit within a network of inter-human subjectivities.

Developing his comparative study of *Age of Empires II*, Sacamano argued that the indies functioned in a similar way to medieval townships, with indie media acting out the role of relics bestowed as gifts upon the community. The fortunes of the indies in the larger commons were based upon the veneration, influence, and fame of their fastidiously crafted social media. Sacamano argued that it was not possible to liberate such person-objects into capital, that indie media could not meaningfully be incorporated as a commodity to be bought and sold like any other.<sup>13</sup> Indie media were, in material terms, something less than mere dust. By definition, they were the products of cults.<sup>14</sup> So, indie media also had no intrinsic value—its value was relational.<sup>15</sup> It was held in esteem by specific participatory communities—but not necessarily by the whole commonwealth.<sup>16</sup> The value of an open source was something primarily bestowed by a benevolent community in recognition of its own benevolence. The indie’s rituals of elevation were acts of authentication performed by moderators that had the approval of each community of practice.<sup>17</sup> These

rituals confirmed a commitment to the pontifex<sup>18</sup> of a particular media since this enabled the community to devote more of their time to cooperative development in the expectation that their good deeds perhaps would, in *futura*, be noticed by other indies in the wider commons. The devotion of the indies to their media was motivated by competition with other indies for willing volunteers. Simultaneously, their unified belief in the commons as a shared resource bound the indies to one another. And so, communities that worked hard to venerate their pontifex would rapidly grow both in reputation and in numbers.

From these observations, Sacamano drew a few important conclusions:

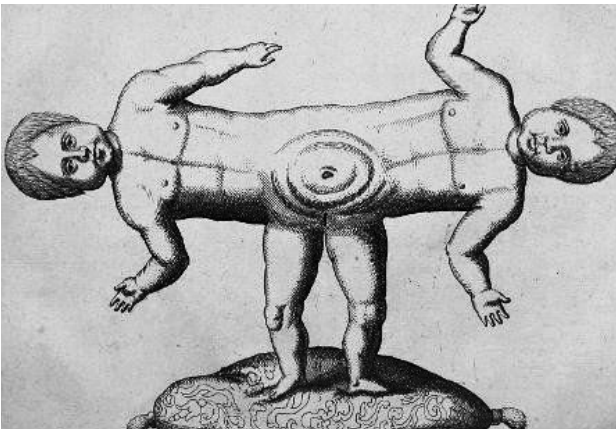
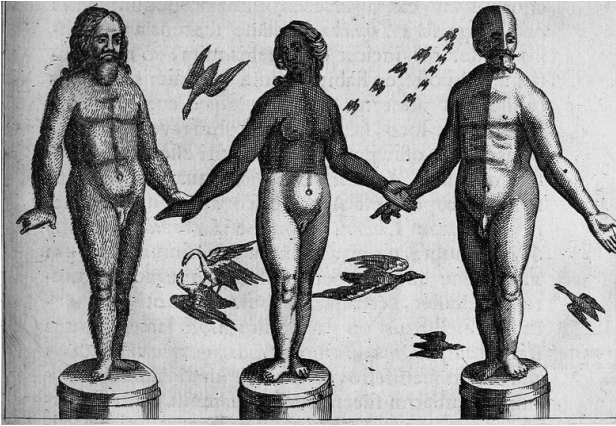
- Indie media were highly affective accumulations of embodied human relations (person-objects).
- The value of indie media was indexically related to the moral virtue of its free circulation.
- Indie media were collectively manifested, elevated (relic-ed), and supported by their cult (community of practice) in order to venerate the commons.
- Indie cults were hosted by their overlord, the commons of open source sainthood.

- The gift of the commons was agonistic, and since it could not be counter-gifted it was, effectively, an eternal debt.

These factors made Sacamano's goals of appropriation and commerce difficult, to say the least. Theft was not an option, as to remove indie media from its host cult would destroy it. Indie media would have to remain in circulation within its venerating community to convince wider congregations that it was authentic. This did not, however, prevent merchants from establishing a context within the commons in which "relic-ing" could take place. Sacamano argued that entrepreneurs should therefore host their own platforms—benevolent communities that would encourage the flourishing of cultural capital, for only having cultivated themselves could the fruits of indie cults be harvested. Sacamano's platform would provide a framework for participation-based development and social networking that emerged from the culture it incorporated. It would reward the creative sector's sweat-equity labor market by providing it with a host, a "free" platform in which creative services that had attracted a critical mass of prosumers would be forever enshrined.<sup>19</sup>



For Sacamano, “Sherlocking” was not theft but, rather, a pious act of hospitality. Sherlocking was the



Figures 04-04.1  
Fortunio Liceti Monsters  
Image Source: <https://pinterest.com/pin/79024168437578133/>

greatest gift.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, the gifting of reliquaries, of platforms for participation, was wholly consistent with the “co-opetitive” culture of reciprocity that generated indie’s authenticity of consensus. Sacamano ventured that a benevolent community would happily reciprocate his offer, agreeing to

the terms and conditions of entry into his community of practice in return for providing their venerable labor as relics. In this way he would secure the consent of indie media’s holy bodies.

Sacamano defended Sherlocking as his moral obligation to safeguard indie media by hosting it in his proprietorial framework, performing “good-works” in return for “good-works.” In return, Sherlocked indies

were only obliged to bestow gifts upon the Willard Corporation “every year on seven different occasions: Easter, haymaking, harvest time, grape harvest time, Christmas, Shrovetide, and Mid-Lent!”<sup>21</sup> These gifts were defined in relation to the proprietorial platforms in which Willard’s Sherlocked indies operated. In general, Willard took a 30% share of any intellectual property developed within its host reliquaries. Such a stake would allow Willard to take the best ideas and develop them independently into their own commodities without breaking the indie’s strict taboos on commerce. Sacamano performed the role of curate, taking care of the soul of the indie media by providing it with an improved ecosystem, a more generative context.<sup>22</sup> Sherlocking, for Sacamano, enabled these indie relics to become whole; to join the body of his reliquary offered true transcendence through the mass veneration of a far greater congregation. Sherlocking was the benevolent exploitation of freeconomics, crowdsourcing, open source, and not-for profit knowledge for-profit. For Sacamano, it was simply a case of choosing the right indie media cult to Sherlock. This was a job for the legions of interns and employees working for Sacamano’s business empire, Willard: Technology for Enchantment™.

## Part 2. Willard: Technology for Enchantment™

Since their origins in the early 1970s, the culture of MMORPGs<sup>23</sup> had been relentlessly medievalist. As Eddo Stern observed, the relation between medieval fantasy and computer gaming began as early as 1972 when US Department of Defence researcher William Crowther was inspired by his love of the pen-and-paper role playing game *Dungeons and Dragons* to develop the seminal text-based game *Colossal Cave Adventure* (1976). In doing so, Crowther had unwittingly inaugurated

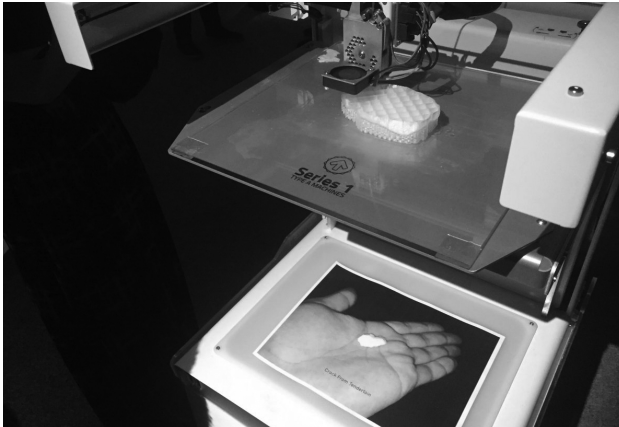


Figure 05  
3D Printed Cocaine  
Image Source: Google  
image search

the “beige age of swords and circuitry”<sup>24</sup> and the definitive narrative genre for what would later develop into socially-networked gaming environments

know as MUDs,<sup>25</sup> and finally as the fully fledged open-world MMORPG that then operated on a global scale.<sup>26</sup> Stern humorously, and presciently, speculated that the *Dungeons and Dragons*-obsessed, “socially awkward ‘geeks’”<sup>27</sup> of the 1960s and ‘70s—a period that witnessed

a great resurgence of fantasy genre publishing—would become the pioneers of the 21st century's online technologies and economies. Stereotyping aside, the art of “questing” in networked real-time strategy games such as *Tribal Nations of The Scorpion*, *Warhammer*, *the Protectorate of the Me-Machine Islands*, *Polare Directorate*, *Medieval: Total War*, and *Runescape* was under-taken by the largest communities on the internet, with *World of Warcraft* alone hitting a subscriber base of 12 million in 2010, making its community larger than many sovereign states. The dominant MMORPGs of the early 21st century were co-constructed by benevolent communities of practice, minecrafters who regularly participated in the veneration of their constructed worlds.

As with Europe's great gothic cathedrals, open world MMORPGs were built by numerous anonymous hands, minecrafters all ascribing to a common, albeit unwritten, typology. This collective production of reverentia made minecrafters particularly susceptible to liturgical displays of belief, to facilitating fantastical revelations, sacrifices, cures and curses. As an accursed share, reverentia were connected to less “saintly” indulgences, such as increasingly outrageous displays of flaming, trolling, and

avatar-on-avatar violence. Since these forms of destructiveness and anti-social behavior were ubiquitous online, the influx of new minecrafters into a MMORPG was directly proportionate to the magnetism of its post-secular experiences. Sacamano's teachings from *Age of Empires II* told his followers that mighty MMORPGs thrived or collapsed on the quality of their reliquaries.

Unlike other luxury trade items such as gadolinium, lutetium, terbium, and dysprosium, these person-objects held an indeterminate and fluctuating value, impossible to calculate in purely monetary terms. In fact, their value exceeded their base immateriality to an extraordinary degree—not just through the high level of codemanship applied to their (often spectacular) skins, nor purely through their reported transubstantiate powers, but rather via their ability to establish and hold in place inter-regional networks of power and control. This was allied to a transnational model of production and distribution that approached “neomedievalism” creatively, as a heuristic device allowing corporations to reconceptualize sovereign statehood as an “historically unique anomaly which had a beginning and will also have an end.”<sup>28</sup> This real-time strategy revelation was the basis of Willard's legions of interns and employees, and

it would generate a relic-ing rush as boomers and speculators—including the impressionable young Petrovsky—scrambled to reach these promised lands. Three major open world MMORPGs battled for mincrafters in this period: the newly post-Communist Tribal Nations of The Scorpion, the Protectorate of the Me-Machine Islands, and the Polare Directorate. While the market in MMORPGs was a lucrative one, the geopolitics of these MMORPGs was complex and unwieldy, based, as it was, on then current neomedieval propaganda concerning US International Relations.<sup>29</sup>

The deep divisions within Tribal Nations of the Scorpion is a case in point. The Grand Duchy—a conspiracy of Kings, governors, numerous legates, journalists, knighted Irishmen and spies—established itself amidst the many fissures in Tribal Nations' plasma pantonality. Taking their lead from the work of children, medieval carpenters and guerrilla gardeners, this micro-nation spearheaded the emergence of green anarchism that swept across MMORPG communities. The Grand Duchy made confederate claims of sovereignty from Tribal Nations that were not entirely preposterous, despite what the chatrooms said to defy the champions of organization and ownership. Their claims upset

the precarious balance of the Tribal Nations. The Grand Duchy led a call to order the disorder of the system and drive out the chaotic influence of the accident in solidarity with the Duchy diaspora that had migrated to the Southernmost fringes of the Protectorate of the Me-Machine Islands, which was, then, one of the few remaining autonomous MMORPGs.

It wasn't possible to just parachute into a MMORPG and set up an in-game marketplace for trading relics. As part of a family of indies, MMORPG communities had their own vernacular systems of value; any interloper would have to spend a great deal of game-time establishing and securing their social capital on a MMORPG's own geo-political terms. Besides, as we have seen, it wasn't possible to *sell* relics... a gift-economy had to be established in which to appropriately venerate and bestow them.

Peer-to-peer investment in Willard financed the exploration, enclosure, and militarisation of MMORPG space. Playing the role of speculators and pioneers, Willard's interns and employees established a system of licensed burghs by preaching the Tragedy of the Commons to ambitious minecrafters with the most remarkable skills. Together, these





Figure o6

Hell's Mouth, Monster Park, Boranzo, Italy, by Giacomo da Vignola, c. 1555  
Image Source: Photocopied from, Lapham's Quarterly, Volume 3, Summer 2012 - *Magic Shows*

parties of experienced minecrafters established incentivized pre-industrial enterprise zones, manors designed to attract professional avatars such as Lindensmiths, Master Relic-ers, and their apprentices. These professionals would not be involved with modding Willard's creations, rather, they would craft the "product" that Willard intended to Sherlock.

These gated communities of practice were to be "protected" by Willard's mercenaries: "The Tong." The Tong would ensure that all makers seeking to work in the pre-industrial zones were suitably skilled and that they were incorporated (Shanghaied) into the Willard Compagnon of Minecrafters. In return for their safe burgage, Willard's subjects would pledge fealty to the corporation's standard terms and conditions of indenture in addition to agreeing to the suspension of *habeas corpus* operational



in the larger, more volatile, MMORPG world. Crucially, they agreed to the regular “gifting” of relics to the Willard corporation as a token of their gratitude to their Tong Seigneurs at Easter, haymaking, harvest time, grape harvest time, Christmas, Shrovetide, and Mid-Lent *in perpetuity*. Williardburghs, therefore, became vital in-game centres for the production and distribution of relics. Mesmerized by “aesthetic awe bordering on the religious,”<sup>30</sup> the MMORPG citizens who lived beyond the walls of Willard’s city-states self-policed and participated in the licensing and “black-boxing” of relics.

### Part 3. Magistra Vitae

To gain some work placement credits in his MBA, Petrovsky applied to free&d for Willard: Technology for Enchantment™ — Sacamano’s monopolistic relic-ing brand. Following a “neomedieval office” model developed by soft capitalists, the Valve Corporation, Willard ran a “flatland” organizational structure. There were no bosses, no line managers. Free&ders chose which projects they wanted to work on and hoped that their relentless innovation and application would eventually land them with paid employment. While, to investors in

the outside world, Willard ostensibly operated like any other corporation, internally the flatland office was a maelstrom of overlapping and shifting loyalties as cabals fought it out for the best project interns.

*...people don't join projects because they're told to. Instead, you'll decide what to work on after asking yourself the right questions.... Employees vote on projects with their feet (or desk wheels). Strong projects are ones in which people can see demonstrated value; they staff up easily. This means there are any number of internal recruiting efforts constantly under way.<sup>31</sup>*

Petrovsky's placement was at the Weiden + Kennedy Building in downtown Portland, Oregon. Aspiring neophytes entered through a battered cabin class door marked "Rose City Room" guarded by a giant beaver, and started to negotiate the building's convoluted intern guidance system. According to data mined from Petrovsky's smart phone, this had been arranged in the circuitous route of Chartres Cathedral's floor labyrinth. It is now estimated that there were at least forty thousand interns ensconced in this maze of typical and standardized retractable post and

belt crowd control mechanisms. The uniform glare of 1,734 florescent strip lights bore down inexorably upon the brows of the interned as they shuffled along the line like extras in *Dawn of the Dead*, eventually reaching a branch in the queue. It wasn't obvious which way would be the quickest. Taking the wrong route ran you all the way around the Rose City Room and back to the entrance, forcing you to retrace your steps! Finally, after just over a week, Petrovsky was able to board Willard's titanic "Sandbox."

The Sandbox provided prospective interns with everything they needed to rehearse and pitch projects in which Willard might show interest. Petrovsky, effectively, was on trial, closely monitored on CCTV by Willard's elite team of recruiters. Petrovsky had raised some sponsorship towards his internship registration fee through RocketHub's crowdfunding site. His biggest benefactor was ITV, the new owners of NBC who were profoundly aroused by his pitch for a populist genre mashup of cooking, medievalism and time travel. Petrovsky pitched TV food pundit and anchorite Greg Wallace on a voyage that would take him from mid 21st-century Norway to medieval England where he would co-host a new historical cooking programme, *Magistra Vitae*.

Inserting the xyzzy command, Wallace would travel cabin class, the film crew monitoring his every move in the ship's hull as he mixed with vagabonds and serfs. The pilot would be important for teasers in between the ads for Hellman's Mayo and Cheese Strings.

In the Sandbox, Petrovsky set to work animating *Magistra Vitae's* opening titles in CGI. The sequence opened inside the lapel pocket of Wallace's Alexander McQueen jacket, which sported a pop-up travel version of the "ITV Peace and Reconciliation Cuboid." Wallace fumbled to grab the cuboid, a completely opaque block of black glass, as it slithered between his olive-oiled fingers. Sensing his greasy fingerprints, it mumbled into action. Wallace beamed his winning smile and sucked down hard on a lime, pulling in his cheeks. The startup instruction beamed out from the cube onto the hammock dangling above him, the light refracting off of his freshly shaven head to startle a neighborly rat.

Petrovsky imagined the ITV P&RC as a four-sided beamer capable of projecting images (1,000 megawatt) from each of its facades. Each screen could be configured to display an ITV online game.<sup>32</sup> *Magistra Vitae* would function as a product placement opportunity for this lucrative online game. The CGI titles made it look

simpler than a deconstructed chicken pie. Wallace clicked the link with his forefinger and was soon online. The ITV games page popped up on the hammock. Wallace's four games of choice were:

1. Family Fortunes
2. Catchphrase
3. The Price is Right
4. Bullseye

Petrovsky's business plan sold the ITV P&RC as "this summer's beach craze". Members of the public would be invited to interact with the games and, hopefully, win cash prizes. Currently ITV online charged 0.14 Bitcoins (BTC) for 50 credits, which was around 0.00278 BTC per game. To secure a cut from in-sourcing the ITV games, Petrovsky invented an exclusive in-game currency based on the "medieval England" theme of *Magistra Vitae*. He would charge a groat per game, four days wages for a farmer, or the price of a quail's egg in late 14th-century England. Those who had no money could indenture their cooking skills or barter food for a punt on the ITV P&RC. The camera crew, meanwhile, would cut an authentic slice of dark age veg talk for the series.

As content-curator-in-chief of the *Magistra Vitae* project, Petrovsky would

effectively be charging his “medieval” clients the real terms equivalent of 0.00694 BTC per game (=140.13 North Korean Won), bringing in a cool profit of 0.00416 BTC per game, enabling the ITV P&RC to pay for itself. Of course, if the participants did well, they could win a cash prize of up to 2.08217 BTC, paid by ITV online each week. “That money, the money they win, that would be safe,” Petrovsky imagined Greg saying to camera. In the pilot episode, the cuboid would be placed in the heart of York, just outside the Shambles. It would be open to view 24 hours per day during the period of lent in 1377.

Petrovsky had taken time to configure a sound hypereconomic financial model. While the cuboid was the size of a small jar of truffles, it produced only images. Sound was to be produced through Binatone Bluetooth enabled speakers that ran on solar power. Wallace, the time traveling costermonger, would buy them from Ca\$h Convertors and sell them back to Ca\$h Convertors when the cuboid’s residency was over. Some of the profits from selling the games to the villeins would cover Wallace’s hefty Michelin restaurant tab and the interest on the speakers from the pawnbrokers. The cuboid’s projection screens would be assembled by the ground force of the Korean People’s Army who would

provide the scaffolding and canvas in return for having a recruitment ad shown on the cuboid during the ad breaks. The internet connection would be provided by KCC Europe, led by Jan Holterman in Berlin in collaboration with the North Korean government's neomedieval investment committee.<sup>33</sup>

The connection would be established through a satellite link from North Korea to servers located in Heiligkreuzkirche (Church of the Holy Cross) in Schwäbisch Gmünd. In return KCC Europe would be offered first refusal on all other ITV online gaming cuboid ventures in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

#### Part 4. Lindow Man

*Magistra Vitae* clearly impressed Petrovksy's masters and soon he was invited upstairs to cruise the Willard office as an official intern. He had heard rumors about "The Tong," a cabal of heavy-shippers busy dreaming up schemes to Sherlock high-street clothes, shoes, skins, shapes, and various types of accessories for avatars as well as blue-chip military, devotional, and liturgical objects for MMORPGs.

While avatar accessories and blue-

chip objects were downloadable, they were licensed, or “leased,” from Willard to the gamer for periods of 12 or 24 months at a time. Tribal Nations of The Scorpion, Protectorate of the Me-Machine Islands, and Polare Directorate would not authenticate jailbroken relics or relics relic-ed by non-compagnon members. Of course, minecrafters could simply have established alternative open source gaming worlds, but, thanks to Willard’s aggressive Sherlocking, the economy of the licensed MMORPGs had become too powerful to make this attractive. Besides, there were other factors to consider. To jail-break or counterfeit a relic reduced it to mere modifiable code. Petrovsky was certain that his code would be an attractive proposition to The Tong—beautifully crafted, certainly, but the possibility of enchantment lay in the richly variegated surfaces generated by the code, not in the code itself.

Despite operating a flatland offline, the online Willard corporation was involved in a complex process of veneration. Not only did Willard’s relic-ing cabals manufacture relics, they furtively established their “authenticity” with whispering campaigns funded by a combination of social micro-payments and hawala. Effectively, the relic-ing cabals transfigured Willard’s products and secured its fortunes by



remunerating influential minecrafters to worship its relics by recuperating social micropayment sites. Social micro-payments had started as a way of supporting good deeds—giving credit to openly online services and resources or sponsoring avatars who gave up drinking for a month. Tax-deductible charitable donations could be made to a large network of influential MMORPG avatars in virtual currencies. Willard would make regular donations to social entrepreneur avatars to secure their favour and ensure that their products were placed. Although the avatars would have no legal obligation to their donor, if they failed to carry out their wishes, payments would unceremoniously cease. The charities were thus held in a reciprocal gift-bond with their corporate benefactors.

Commercial relic-ers such as Petrovsky held multiple accounts with the main MMORPGs and regularly took part in the gameplay as participant observers—sometimes playing “free-burghers” to surreptitiously abet Willard’s trade in influence or acting as The Tong seigneurs running various protection rackets. Petrovsky’s avatar “Lindow Man” was a mainstay on Protectorate of the Me-Machine Islands where he made rank of “Provost” on the board of a major social enterprise, “Caves

of Angry Shockhead.” Attempting to flesh out all the side-stories into the bargain, Provost Lindow Man spent almost a year as a mole developing the business plan of a splinter group of Duchy who were calling for the formation of a People’s Grand Duchy Republic of the Unfortunate Islands. Playing the consummate high-net-worth Duchy, Lindow Man led a coven of plotters from amidst the topiary of the Caves of Angry Shockhead in the Pays de Champagne-Terre-Blanche to democratize their economic



Figure 07

Werewolf, From *On the Nature and Quality of Animals*, an Anonymous sixteenth-century Greek book. Image Source: Photocopied from, *Lapham's Quarterly*, Volume 3, Summer 2012 - *Magic Shows*

opportunities. This infamous “Grand Plot” involved a process of gradual arboreal Cornwallisation, orchestrating territoire and vaguely maintaining some internal consistency as “agents for social change.”

Lindow Man’s high standing in “Me-Machine” regularly brought Petrovksy into contact with Willard’s

cabal of virtual currency traders, wealthy avatars who grew rich from taking commission before making micro-payments to MMORPG avatars in rival gaming platforms. Seeing a short-term opportunity to make some money, he moved his desk away from the relic-ers and began working with the virtual trading project cabal.

Legally speaking, such a profession should not have existed. MMORPGs were still obliged by offline customs authorities to internally police orders for high amounts of virtual currency as well as avatars with extraordinary order transactions. Unless they were earned through in-game labor, much of which was performed by political prisoners in Chinese labor-camps, the authentication and movement of virtual currencies online required the professional skills of Lindensmiths.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, there were no legal means to make transactions directly between the accounts of rival MMORPGs. A virtual currency had to first be exchanged into an offline currency—where it was subject to duty—before being exchanged into another virtual currency.<sup>35</sup> As hard currencies plummeted in value, this became a very risky business. The virtual currency traders circumvented this problem by using *hawala*—“which

relies not on wire transfers and other recorded transactions, but rather on in-person deposits that reach their intended recipients through untraceable faxes, emails, and cell phones that are then shredded, deleted or discarded.”<sup>36</sup>

*Hawala* transactions allowed currency transfers to be made across incompatible platforms and offline taxation to be circumvented.

Although much of the open world MMORPGs preferred to operate gift and barter economies, fostering collaboration and reciprocity, the blurring of the line between gifts and commodities took hold of MMORPGs as the offline world developed an urgent need to establish a stable global-reserve currency that was geographically independent. In their desperation, many chose to believe that a virtual currency would be more likely to hold its value within the virtual realm at a time when offline currencies were extremely volatile.<sup>37</sup> As national credit ratings dropped and investors lost faith in hard currencies, once “alternative” currencies and means of exchange flourished. The fact that MMORPG currencies were denationalized made them a more viable proposition; to many they even offered the promise of an end to currency speculation and attendant hyperinflation. MMO-RPG banks also had the salient advantage

of being a product of the mass participation and “situational utility”<sup>38</sup> of the hypereconomy. The fact that each run on off-line banks saw swarms of panicked savers move their investments into the MMORPG hypereconomy only helped to strengthen this impression.

## Part 5. Hypereconomics

*...a ‘hyper-economic’ system combines flows of globally aggregated scalar information on prices with mechanisms for sharing knowledge about situational utilities of groups of resources.<sup>39</sup>*

The seeming stability of the virtual currencies came as a result of minecrafters pioneering their own hybrid value system. In the early days of open world MMORPGs, minecrafters gradually switched their investments from hard currencies to virtual currencies. They did this partly for ideological reasons, and partly to advance their game progression in an online open world. Ideologically speaking, minecrafters saw hard currencies as a dated and corrupt concept. Such currencies were underwritten by offline sovereign states with the purpose of consolidating their power over the users of the currency and with the express aim of aiding and

abetting the economic exploitation of self-interested individuals who did not participate in the “real economy.” In contrast, virtual currencies were the product of an emerging hypereconomy of *prosumers*.<sup>40</sup> While prosumers, like the indies, utilized the commons to nurture their communities of interest, they were not committed to “natural economies” such as barter or gift-bondage.<sup>41</sup> Nor were they morally opposed to finance-based trade. On the contrary, prosumers actively pursued an assemblage of economic practices that dissolved production (Bataille’s superabundance of energy, the erotic, the sacred), transfer (sale, exchange, gift, theft), and consumption (review, adaptation, redistribution) into *integrated* and *calculable* acts of hypereconomic circulation.

Following indie’s “No Lurkers” code, the hypereconomy was not split into producers and consumers: everyone was required to be a producer-consumer. Those who did not produce could not consume (and vice-versa). Although hypereconomic practices existed off and online, hypereconomic currencies developed in the virtual realm where they could be more easily calibrated in relation to *virtus*. Online hypereconomic systems developed the unquantifiable relational value of indie media as a “situational” concept of

value *that might be quantified*. A handful of trusted hypereconomic accounting systems established the virtue of a given economy. Virtual currency was, thus, widely regarded to be a “virtuous currency” in contrast with that circulating in “corrupt” offline banks.

The hypereconomy exploited advanced information technology to combine information on prices with complex data on *virtus*, producing a

richer index of value to inform more efficient trade in goods and services. In the hypereconomy, *virtus* was shorthand for symbolic or cultural capital, which, as we have seen, was a notoriously difficult quality

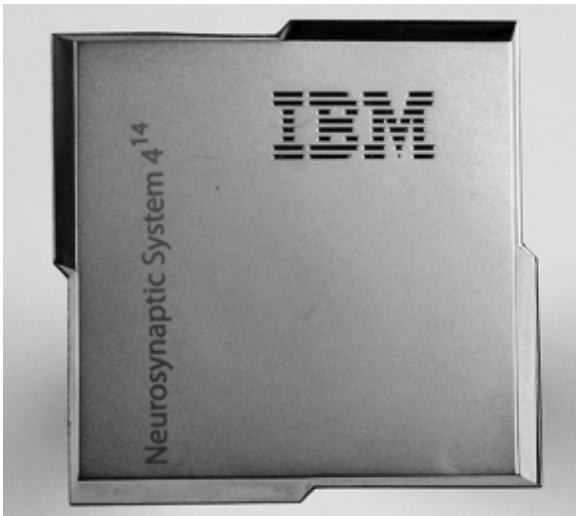


Figure o8

IBM's "brain-inspired" microchip, it transforms mobility and the Internet of Things through sensory perception. Image Source: <http://research.ibm.com/cognitive-computing/neurosynaptic-chips>

to index as it was bestowed socially rather than via a “direct transfer of resources or observations of natural agents’ activities.”<sup>42</sup> The hypereconomy emerged in the 1990s as an attempt to quantify (and thus to subjugate) social capital as “situational” knowledge: user-generated knowledge produced by prosumers for prosumers. In the booming Experience Economy<sup>43</sup> of the 1990s, the *virtus*-value of goods

and services would go up and down depending on the collective experience of their communities of users. Whether it be a free-range egg, a cordless power drill, a cluster of spa services, or an avatar's high heels, the hypereconomic commodity was a relational hub in a network of inter-human subjectivities. Since its esoteric value was maintained by the veneration of the community, the situational nature of a hypereconomic commodity made it a "commodified-relic." If the hypereconomic commodity was a person-object incubated via online peer reviews, community discussion boards, and word-of-mouth, then it followed that the discourses that enveloped them were a form of relic-ing.

Willard's involvement in the emerging funny money markets was underwritten by its trade as an agency "collecting individual experiences and forming aggregated situational and general utility estimates."<sup>44</sup> Willard applied unique situational information, gathered through its embedded interns, to lead trade in virtual currencies. It was able to use this information to become the first corporation to sell and profit from indulgences.<sup>45</sup> As the Willard Corporation became more deeply immersed in the hypereconomy's rapidly expanding markets, it began to hold most of its



assets in virtual liquidity. Although it was a limited company registered in the



Figure 09  
Power Nap Pillow  
Image Source:  
Screen captured  
using an iPhone

Tampa Bay Area, Willard largely avoided paying US\$ taxes to Florida's Department of Revenue by making all of its transactions exclusively in L\$ denominations.<sup>46</sup> As the holder of some two trillion in linden dollar-denominated savings, Willard's investors had reason to be concerned about

the long-term strength of the L\$. To spread its risk, Willard also held liquid reserves of Me-Machine XIII Platinum, Bitcoins, WoWGold, Dark Age of Camelot Platinum, Tribal Nations of The Scorpion Groats, and Smurfberries, allowing it to lead trade in currencies on the funny money markets.<sup>47</sup>

Willard's decision to start paying its employees and investors exclusively in Linden Dollars—the virtual currency that, in spite of showing 12% inflation, was rapidly becoming the most stable on the planet—was a seismic leap in the history of capital investment, money,

and credit.

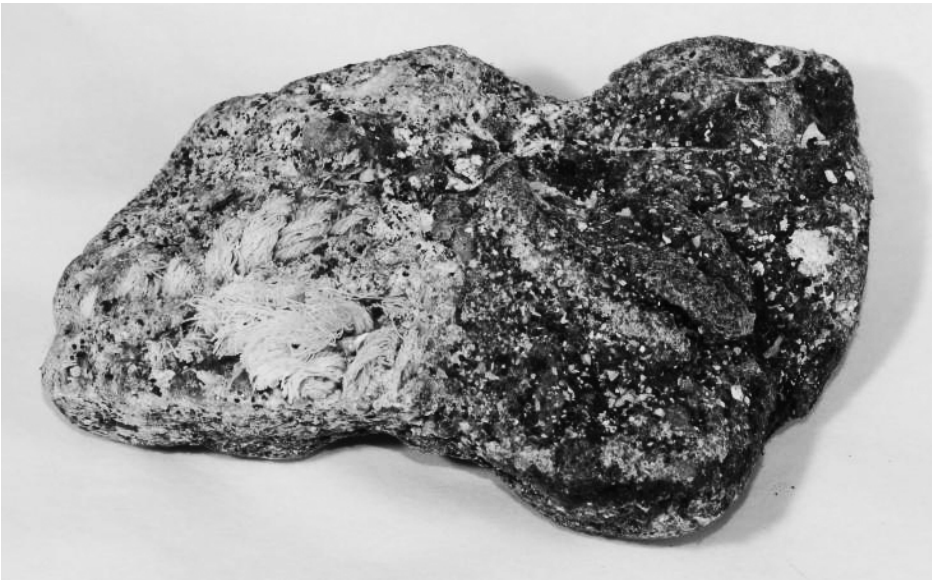
Offline, the Clauswitzian-Westphalian system (CW) of territorial sovereignty and nation building began to give way to something that mirrored the multiple, asymmetric layers of authority found in MMORPGs, with each “nation-state” sharing and devolving significant elements of governance. The popular success of neomedieval sovereigntism meant that there were more micronation-states in the world than at any time since the mid-17th century. Their public sectors emaciated from soaring debt-to-GDP ratios, excluded from larger monetary unions, and unable to foster strong fiat currencies of their own, many newly sovereign micronation-states took the nuclear option of privatizing money, allowing their citizens to “make their dealings in a currency they trust.”<sup>48</sup> The abolition of legal tender initially generated anxiety, overwhelming people with different means to make everyday transactions. While foreign fiat currencies remained cheap and inflationary, the time-banking mercantilism promulgated by LETS became the most trusted form of currency, securing the wealth of regions. Mass generation of *virtus* through LETS rapidly established manorial economies characterized by highly localized neofeudal divisions

of labor. The greater the number of manorial economies pursuing endogenous LETS there were, the more intra-national imbalances grew between autonomous merchant towns, further eroding one-nation statehood. In place of the CW system arose a disintegrated patchwork of fiefdoms banking in time and, in many cases, attempting to provide their own forms of social assistance.

Since LETS was designed to restrict the transnational movement of capital, and since there were no trustworthy fiat currencies, virtual currencies became the primary means of deterritorialising capital. Those who resented the economic disparities and market restrictions of “village economics” sought an easy way out of LETS by participating in the transnational funny money markets. While LETS offered a steady route to community prosperity, virtual currencies promised something of the neoliberal era’s unbounded wealth and mobility. For many, laboring locally in the LETS communities was far less enticing than minecrafting online.

The more reliant the world became on denationalized currencies, the more transnationals like the Willard Corporation became involved in leveraging global policy with its vast reserves of digital money and virtual

estate. As non-state actors such as Willard began to monopolize offline transnational relations, the remaining large nation-states belatedly focused their attentions on the stewardship of online territories.<sup>49</sup> Bidding wars erupted between rival conglomerations of private and state operatives over the “aggregated symbolic constructs”<sup>50</sup> of virtual estate. Large corporations and state treasuries competed to exchange cheap fiat currencies for strong L\$, hoping to make the L\$ a likely candidate for a single global currency to efface the atomized LETS. Those nation-states still seeking to maintain their fiat currencies began



**Figure 10**

Plastiglomerate: A term that was proposed by Patricia Corcoran, Charles Moore and Kelly Jazvac for a stone that contains mixtures of sedimentary grains, and other natural debris (e.g. shells, wood) that is held together by hardened molten plastic. It has been considered a potential marker of the Anthropocene, an informal epoch of the Quaternary proposed by some social scientists, environmentalists, and geologists. -Wiki

Image Source: <http://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/2014-4-july-august/green-life/plastic-permanence-our-litter-now-part-geologic-record>

to devote an increasing amount of federal investment in “online security,” the development of virtual military strategy. The effect of this was to increase the value of online territory creating the rapid expansion of burghs and a steep rise in the prices of virtual goods and services. Roleplaying online to minecraft indulgences for Sherlockers such as Willard, or as mercenaries acting on behalf of nation-states, became far more lucrative than working in the restricted local and national economies off-line. As a corollary of their wide adoption and growth among many who had hitherto never ventured online to roleplay, MMORPGs became increasingly closed worlds.

## Part 6. Brandeum

*Thorns whisper perfidious penance as  
bats unleash sanguine fangs. Foolish  
mortals secrete perfidious abattoirs as  
oblivion engulfs the spectral requiem.  
Darkness ascends silver deception while  
pyres collapse from Elysian arterial spray.  
Prayers unleash nocturnal torment and  
entangle our bloody souls.<sup>51</sup>*

From careful analysis of his Wikipedia entry, we can see that Petrovksy’s internship officially ended after eleven-

and-a-half months, just before Willard would have been obliged to give him a permanent contract. To encourage his free&d, Willard started to pay Petrovsky in micro-payments of untaxable L\$. As well as a loyalty reward, Sacamano gave Petrovksy a stake in the fabrication side of Willard: access to treatable code, but without files, only with the vendor's full permission, to whom Petrovsky was obliged to put permissions ("No Copy, No Transfer," as this licence was commonly known). Without the exclusive templates for treatable relics and skins, Petrovsky was lucky to make a profit of more than 60.000L\$ a month from relic-ing. Despite operating a developmental flatland, Sacamano still controlled the means of distribution, the context into which the virtual relics shipped. As such, Petrovksy and fellow relic-ers constantly risked being Sherlocked on any innovations they made. The pressing question for the budding entrepreneur was, how do you make making make a living? This became the million linden dollar question that Petrovsky set out to answer in his MBA thesis *Transfiguration is Commonplace*.

Encouraged by Sacamano, Petrovksy returned to *What Do Reliquaries Do for Relics?*, a classic MBA MOOC set text. Here, Hahn argued that medieval relics were

considered part of the still-living world and thus able to reproduce themselves. They are able to do this in terms of contact relics—oil, perfume or cloths that are allowed to touch the body and gain a measure of sanctity—but they also “reproduce” more immediately. They make gifts of themselves.”<sup>52</sup>

While virtual relics were designed to reproduce easily, they could not encounter the offline bodies of minecrafters. Petrovsky wrote:

The “knowledge production” of the relic-object was, then, validated through the addition of a second material element—the reliquary. It is at this point of “enframement” that the relic would conjoin with its container. The reliquary comes to define the elevated relic by paradoxically masking (in precious materials) the very social relations that brought it (and continue to bring it) into being. In this sense it becomes the material body of the relic and by extension the body of the saint. In this sense the reliquary can be understood as compound object with the physically abhorrent matter inside (a piece of cloth, a bone, parchment or skin) retaining a base connection

to the commonplace, making its objecthood secondary to the relational power now transmitted through the aesthetic encasement. This function is particularly apparent in reliquaries that conceal their contents (as opposed to a philatory which allow a partial view inside) and are never intended to be opened. Removing the core from the realm of the visual emphasizes a sacral power not meant for human eyes.<sup>53</sup>

For Petrovsky, the difficulty with Willard's licensing model and over-reliance on Sherlocking remained that the ready accessibility of the relic's code could breed incredulity. The virtual relic, somehow, had to be concealed in a reliquary of its own. But how do you conceal and deny access to a relic that is fundamentally codified and infinitely reproducible? It was in thinking about the symbiotic relationship between the relic and reliquary that Petrovsky hit upon an idea of "Brandeum," a hybridised wearable computer technology that combined romanticised nostalgia for a tween cult with commercial bioinformatics.<sup>54</sup> Wearable Brandeum pendants would host the code of the most exclusive blue-chip virtual relics available, but would be unreadable and impenetrable.



To attempt to open the pendant would result in destroying the host device and thus its code. To become part of the body of the gamer, the host device had to transubstantiate—it had to be a person-object in its own right. Petrovsky had the perfect wetware in mind.

As a ten-year-old, Petrovsky received a lapel sticker containing DNA extracted from the corpse of his dead grandmother. Such cheap pendants, pioneered by Cryostick, a team of entrepreneurs from Canada's Dragon's Den, were handed out like candy at major brand funeral homes, unwittingly spawning a craze among tweens. Kids were transfixed by the macabre cult of swap-meets that revolved around the cyrostickers. Seizing the opportunity, Cryostick had the bright idea of licensing the DNA of dead and living celebrities, transforming it into mass-produced stickers, and bundling them with packets of potato chips. Although the tween cult lasted only just over a year, bankrupting Cryostick, a large number of adult collectors, notably the MMORPG demographic, ensured that the secondary and black markets remained very healthy for Cryostickers. Petrovsky, as we know, was one of the most avid collectors.

While Petrovsky free&ded for Willard, developments in bio-

informatics had dramatically reduced the price of DNA writers, portable storage devices that could burn data onto strands of DNA. Ceasing the opportunity, Petrovksy used his meagre profits from Willard to trade in celebrity Cyrosticker DNA. Meanwhile, at Willard, he took the lead with his project: "Brandeum." The Brandeum cabal soon attracted a team of young interns who worked hard at costing and outsourcing the production of wearable relics to Chinese labor camps. Brandeum traded aggressively as a developer for minecrafters who wanted unique wearable computing. Within a month, Brandeum had launched a range of pendants and virtual reality goggles designed to host Willard's bluechip relics.<sup>55</sup> As a collector himself, Petrovksy was perfectly placed to exploit the Cyrostickers nostalgia among minecrafters of his own age, creating miniature marvels hermetically-sealed in finest gadolinium. In a split-profit deal, Sacamano would sell Brandeum's products on HSN as talismans for devotees of Tribal Nations of The Scorpion, Protectorate of the Me-Machine Islands and Polare Directorate, offering his faithful congregation "automated semantic signalling, higher levels of complexity, efficiency and adaptability, global cognition and advanced system self-consciousness."



“When Transfiguration became  
Commonplace” was originally published  
as Chapter V. within *thN Lng folk 2go*:  
*Investigating Future PreModerns™*

## Endnotes

1. Alexandr Petrovsky, *Transfiguration is Commonplace*, MBA thesis, University of the Mall of America Online.
2. Bob Sacamano, MOOC course descriptor, "Neomedieval Entrepreneurialism," Franklin School of Leadership, University of the Mall of America Online, PATH.
3. See John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *The Witch Doctors: Making Sense of the Management Gurus* (New York: Times Books, 1996).
4. See Chris Anderson, *Free: The Future of a Radical Price*, (New York: Hyperion, 2009).
5. See Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). 6 Florin Curta, "Merovingian and Carolingian Gift Giving," *Speculum* 81 (2006): 676 [671–699].
6. Florin Curta, "Merovingian and Carolingian Gift Giving," *Speculum* 81 (2006): 676 [671–699].
7. Raymond Kurzweil, *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2005).
8. Curta, "Merovingian and Carolingian Gift Giving," 674.
9. "The simplest answer to the first question is that a relic is a physical object that is understood to carry the virtue of a saint or Christ, literally the virtue but more accurately the power of the holy person. It could be a bone or bones, some other portion of the body, or merely some object that has been sanctified by having come into contact with a sacred person": Cynthia Hahn, "What Do Reliquaries Do for Relics?" *Numen* 57.3 (2010): 290.
10. "Not a period term at all, but an open-ended theme": Leslie J. Workman, quoted in Kathleen Verduin, "The Founding and the Founder: Medievalism and the Legacy of Leslie J. Workman," *Studies in Medievalism XVII* (2009): 19.
11. Such as revelations, cures, and the cursing of enemies.
12. See Patrick Geary, "Sacred Commodities: The Circulation of Medieval Relics," in Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 174–176.
13. Cynthia Hahn speculated on the relational qualities of medieval relics and their reliquaries (as a compound unit) that contribute to their "omnipresent persistence" as dual transmitters of aesthetic and social meaning. A relic re-moved from context, Hahn argued, has no intrinsic worth. Even within a taxonomy of the commonplace, a relic is less than abject. It was only through the Christian process of "relic-ing" that transfiguration occurred. This involved an elaborate series of clerical investigations and public trials to establish the "truth" of the object

- in question before veneration in the final ritual of “elevation.” See Cynthia Hahn, “Objects of Devotion and Desire: Relics, Reliquaries, Relation, and Response,” in *Objects of Devotion and Desire: Medieval Relic to Contemporary Art* (New York: Bertha & Karl Leubsdorf Art Gallery, 2011), 8–19.
14. Subcultures of shared interests that transformed into sophisticated communities of practice with unique rituals, proclivities and motivations.
  15. The relational nature of the gift within the indies was the basis of the “situational” nature of value in the hyperconomy that emerged from the indies.
  16. “... ‘authenticity’ meant less identification with a particular saint’s body than efficacy in terms of communal needs”: Geary, “Sacred Commodities,” 181.
  17. For example, forum mods, elected committee members of not-for-profit collectives, etc.
  18. The pontifex was a common “bridge,” a basic kernel that allowed different user groups to cooperate in the development of a media.
  19. In developing the indie reciprocal economy of gift/countergift, Sacamano aimed to establish a modern form of serfdom, playing the role of Seigneur. Medieval serfs were in a gift-bond with their overlords. Seigneurs allowed serfs to use their land in return for the bestowal of gifts at defined times each year. Since land was not incommensurate with the gifts that serfs could offer (the produce of their labor), the gift-bond was, in effect, a debt in perpetuity. In hosting indies, Sacamano, likewise, established a gift-bond (a “Sherlock”) in perpetuity, legally enshrining the host’s terms and conditions as “A Pledge of Fealty to the Overlord Willard.”
  20. Sacamano here drew inspiration from “furta sacra,” the cult of the “holy theft” of saints’ relics, and the stories of their movement between reliquaries.
  21. Jean-Claude Schmitt, “Appropriating the Future”, in J. A. Burrow and Ian P. Wei, eds., *Medieval Futures: Attitudes to the Future in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), 7.
  22. “This is a political discourse with its roots in the predominant Anglo-American critique of community and common property, dating back to the fourteenth century: that the ‘sloth, idleness, and misery’ of serfs in feudal England represented the biggest obstacle to the productivity of agriculture”: Michael Goldman, “Customs in Common: The Epistemic World of the Commons Scholars,” *Theory and Society* 26.1 (February 1997): 4.
  23. Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games.
  24. Eddo Stern, “A Touch of Medieval: Narrative, Magic and Computer Technology in Massively Multiplayer Computer Role-Playing Games,” in

- Frans Mäyrä, ed., *Computer Games and Digital Cultures Conference Proceedings* (Tampere, Finland: Tampere University Press, 2002), 258.
25. Multi-User Dungeons.
26. Romantic medievalisms were not at all limited to the role-playing game genre. For example, in the mid-1980s, Nintendo's platformer Mario Kicked-off the greatest franchise in gaming history, reviving the video gaming industry after it collapsed in 1983. The choice of back-story was no coincidence. Mario must rescue a princess from an evil dragon residing in a medieval castle.
27. Stern, "A Touch of Medieval," 259.
28. Joerg Friedrichs, "The Meaning of New Medievalism," *European Journal of International Relations* 7.4 (2001): 481.
29. International Relations neomedievalism, despite the apocalyptic language adopted by some contributors, did not suggest an actual return to a new "dark age" but instead utilized the past to shake up modern ontological assumptions about the inevitability and immutability of the nation-state system.
30. Alfred Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology," in J. Coote and A. Shelton, eds., *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 40.
31. VALVE, "How Do I Pick My Projects?", in *Valve Handbook for New Employees* (Seattle, Washington), 8. It may be pertinent to note here that certain anchoritic tendencies blighted Valve's post-Fordist utopia. Insiders reported high instances of social withdrawal ranging from protracted periods of time spent in washroom cubicles to bouts of faux monasticism where employees (initially as a kind of joke referring to the overt medievalism of online game culture) began to hand-write code by candlelight in makeshift scriptoriums. One of the first employees ever to "quit" Valve is reported to have spent nearly all of her time in the flatland's gym. She allegedly told a Wired magazine reporter, "The treadmill offered me a kind of meditative respite. It reminded me of a summer job where I worked on an assembly line building cell-phones. I watched TV in the evenings (studying too, of course) and slept at night. Sometimes, closing my eyes on the treadmill, I would imagine myself as a chunk of molded plastic trundling along the conveyor belt. Kind of self-enclosed, you know, unconcerned and happy going nowhere." For many of its indentured workers and interns, the flatland was an infinite hell of punitive creativity.
32. Please visit <http://www.itv.com/Games/default.html> and make your selection.
33. Tentative comparisons between the multiple loyalties of Western European Christendom and both the increasing power-overlaps

between sovereign states and the transnational market economy began as early as 1962 with the classic realist, Arnold Wolfers, proposing a kind of new medievalism”, a move “toward complexities that blur the dividing line between domestic and foreign policy”: *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), 241–242. A novel development in international relations in the early 21st century involved the world’s largest single currency unions—NAFTA and PR China—working in collaboration with global corporations to encourage separatist movements in rival economic unions of “medieval” nation states, most notably the European Union. This often meant surreptitiously supporting “medievalising” tendencies in foreign cultures and politics. Once independent, small nations would either establish a weak currency of their own (and thus could be new sources of cheap labor), denationalize money completely or align their reserves with one or other of the hegemonic reserve currencies: the Dollar and the Yuan. Those who lived in the sovereign states of the reserve currencies were destined to gain a greater share of the world’s wealth. Such neomedieval foreign policy was informed by a reading of Janet L. Abu-Lughod’s analysis of the collapse of global trade, “Restructuring the Thirteenth Century World System”, in *Before and After European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250–1350* (New York: Oxford, 1989), where she writes, “Of crucial importance is

the fact that the ‘Fall of the East’ preceded the ‘Rise of the West,’ and it was this devolution of the preexisting system that facilitated Europe’s easy conquest,” (361).

34. The Lindensmith’s role was to verify the authenticity of virtual currency and issue it with the Public Key Certificate required before it could be traded into hard currency by online brokers. The Lindensmith would sanctify the currency by performing a ritual developed in the Caves of Angry Shockhead involving the laying on of hands while reciting the NASM assembly code for a boot sector that prints “Real Money” in PURE. The role was comparable to the traditional Goldsmith’s job of inspecting the “Corrupt, shaved, and false coins that assailed the medieval economy”: Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 61. Lindensmiths were members of the International Compagnon of Lindensmiths, a professional body that closely monitored their activity.
35. “All of the other virtual currency dealers require players to make real money transactions outside of the game and then log back into the game to receive their purchases. Even then, the goods must be delivered in such a way so that the game moderators do not suspect foul play. In this regard, the virtual currency exchange is more akin to the black market than it is to the Federal Reserve. As a result, statistics for the exchange of virtual goods are imperfect at best, and no one can really know

## Endnotes continued

- how much trading is going on": Jordan Hicks, "Virtual Currency Exchange," *What MMORPG?*, June 6, 2011: <http://www.whatmmorpg.com/articles/virtual-currency-exchange.php>.
36. Bruce Holsinger, "Follow the Money," in *Neomedievalism, Neo-conservatism and the War on Terror* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm, 2007), 24–25.
  37. For example, following England, Wales, and Northern Ireland's exit from the European Union, the run on Sterling forced the Bank of England to adopt Smurfberries (SfB) as the nation's currency. England's treasury became the *de jure* property of Petrovsky's Caves of Angry Shockhead Investment Group, an elite cabal of avatars based in Me-Machine Islands.
  38. Alexander Chislenko and Madan Ramakrishnan, "Hyper-Economy: Combining Price and Utility Communication in Multi-Agent Systems," paper presented at "ISAS '98: Intelligent Systems and Semiotics," IEEE International Symposium on Intelligent Control/ Computational Intelligence in Robotics and Automation/ Intelligent Systems and Semiotics, Gaithersburg, Maryland, 1998.
  39. Chislenko and Ramakrishnan, "Hyper-Economy."
  40. Alvin Toffler first introduced this phrase in "The Prosumer Ethic," in *The Third Wave* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1980), 403.
  41. "At no time in the Middle Ages was the European economy strictly speaking a 'natural economy,' in which barter and self-sufficiency characterized the production, exchange, and consumption of commodities": Geary, "Sacred Commodities," 170.
  42. Chislenko and Ramakrishnan, "Hyper-Economy," 2.
  43. See Gerhard Schulze, *Erlebnisgesellschaft: Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1992), and Joseph Pine and James Gilmore, *The Experience Economy* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999).
  44. Chislenko and Ramakrishnan, "Hyper-Economy," 4.
  45. Since it was possible to exchange hard cash for virtual currencies, it was, effectively, possible to purchase and trade in "indulgences," hypereconomic bonds that came preloaded with *virtus*. Holding virtual currency did not immediately generate *virtus*, but it could be used to support philanthropic actions that would, thus raising standing in the hypereconomy. Raising your user approval rating could, for example, be "bought" by purchasing enough sprites for minecrafters to raise a new barn for their community. Conversely, the generation of *virtus* could translate into virtual currency. Willard's loyal interns worked tirelessly as minecrafters to generate *virtus* and raise the corporation's approval rating. The virtual investments they generated



- formed hypereconomic bonds for Willard to trade as indulgences.
46. The USA continued to use the 2001 Patriot Act to restrict the laundering of its nationalized US\$ currency into virtual currencies. Laundering in virtual currencies, such as Bitcoin and Liberty Reserve, involved hackers wiring money from a fiat currency to a virtual currency, then exchanging it back again into hard cash, making its origins almost impossible to trace.
  47. Commission was taken by virtual currency traders, who would take a cut of 3% per transaction in virtual currencies only, none of which was subject to taxation or to restrictions on the laundering of nationalized currencies.
  48. Frederick Hayek, *Choice in Currency: A Way to Stop Inflation* (London: Institute of Economic Affairs, 1976), 19.
  49. Some nation-states sought to legalize the booming trade between fiat and virtual currencies in a late effort to tax and control it. See Park Si-soo, "Ruling to Boost Sale of Cyber Money," *The Korea Times*, January 10, 2010.
  50. Chislenko and Ramakrishnan, "Hyper-Economy", 4.
  51. Petrovsky's draft for Brandeum's corporate vision.
  52. Cynthia Hahn, "What Do Reliquaries Do for Relics?" *Numen* 57.3 (2010): 295.
  53. Petrovsky, *Transfiguration is Commonplace*.
  54. The most valuable pendants were worn low around gamer's necks, hiding them from would-be thieves.
  55. On establishing the Brandeum cabal, Petrovsky was offered a paid position by Willard. Had he turned this offer down, would he have retained full control of the project's intellectual property?